

18th CONGRESS, }  
1st Session.

[ 74 ]

## MEMORIAL

OF THE

*Citizens of Richmond and Manchester, in Virginia,*

UPON THE SUBJECT OF THE

## Proposed Tariff,

NOW BEFORE CONGRESS.

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FEBRUARY 17, 1824.

Read, and, referred to the committee of the whole House to which is committed  
the bill to amend the several acts imposing duties on Imports.

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WASHINGTON:

PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON.

1824.

1861 CONGRESS  
1st Session

MEMORIAL

Citizens of Richmond and Manchester, in Virginia

TO THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Proposed Bill

FOR BETTER TREATMENT

FEBRUARY 17, 1861

Read and referred to the committee on the whole House to report on a memorial from the citizens of Richmond and Manchester, in Virginia, praying for the passage of a bill to amend the several laws imposing duties on imports.

## MEMORIAL.

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At a Meeting of the Citizens of Richmond and Manchester, at the Merchants' Coffee-House, in the City of Richmond, on Saturday, the 14th of February, 1824, called by the Chairman of a former meeting, on the subject of the proposed Tariff, now before Congress:

The Committee appointed at that meeting to prepare a memorial to the Congress of the United States in opposition thereto, presented the same; which was read, and *unanimously* adopted by the meeting. Whereupon:

*Resolved*, That a copy of the memorial, just adopted, be signed by the Chairman and Secretary, and transmitted to the Representative in Congress from this district, and like copies be furnished to the editors of newspapers in this city.

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*The Memorial of sundry Merchants, and other citizens of Richmond and Manchester, to the Congress of the United States*

### RESPECTFULLY REPRESENTS:

That they have been much alarmed by the introduction of a bill to the House of Representatives, entitled "A bill to amend the several acts for imposing duties on imports."

Your memorialists have entertained the opinion, that the present Tariff is too high, and that its exorbitance has caused, in many instances, the consumers of manufactured articles to pay heavy bounties to our own manufacturers, whereby great benefits have accrued to that class, at the expense of the agricultural and commercial classes, which constitute the great bulk of our people. Your memorialists did entertain the hope, that the manufacturers would have been satisfied with the great aid which these high duties have rendered to them; but in this they are entirely disappointed, and find that that small, but persevering class of the community, have, by their exertions, been enabled to lay before the assembled Representatives of the people a scheme, by which that people shall be compelled to submit to the alternative of paying still more exorbitant prices for articles of great necessity and convenience, or to buy similar articles of inferior value of domestic fabrication, at almost equally high prices, or to abandon the use of them altogether. And for what purpose is it, that this people are now required to submit to these heavy exactions? Is it to

provide a *revenue* for a parental Government, which is charged with our defence? No such purpose is pretended.

The revenue appears, from the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, and from the last message of the President, to be in a flourishing condition: and the motive which has been avowed for this new system, is, that the manufactures of our own country may be fostered and protected.

Your memorialists do not mean to enter into an examination of the question, whether Congress have any constitutional power to lay and collect imposts and duties, for the purpose of giving encouragement and protection to one class of the community, to the injury, and at the expense, of all other classes; they will merely venture to suggest, that this important power was granted by the constitution for the express purpose of "paying the debts, and providing for the common defence, and *general* welfare of the United States;" and they cannot perceive how this *general* object can be attained by fostering a *particular* class, to the prejudice of others.

Whenever it has been found necessary to increase the tariff for the purpose of raising a revenue, to be appropriated for the good of the whole, your memorialists have not complained, nor will they ever complain, when it shall be found necessary for such purpose; but they cannot believe that Congress are acting entirely within their legitimate sphere, when they depart from this great object, and put their hands into the pockets of the great mass of the people, for the purpose of transferring the money there found into the pockets of the favored few.

When we consider the progressive increase of duties which has taken place since the establishment of the Federal Government to this time, we must be convinced that our manufactures have, by the mere operation of laws intended principally for the raising a revenue, been fostered and protected to a prodigious extent. In consequence thereof, there are many articles of foreign manufacture that are now seldom, if ever, imported. How rarely do we hear of the importation of the manufactures of leather, lead, pewter and tin, paper, stationery, hats, &c. &c. paints, twine, manufactures of iron, together with the coarser fabrics of cotton? These, and many others, may be almost considered as prohibited. Where then is the legislative encouragement to stop? As we advance, the point at which it is to terminate, is continually receding from us: we fear we shall never reach it, till we are barred by a *total prohibition*.

To this result we seem to be advancing gradually, but certainly. When a heavy duty is first imposed on foreign articles, the manufacturers seem, for a while, to be contented; because the encouragement, thus given to them, enables those whose capitals are already invested, or about to be invested, in manufactures, to realize great profits. These great profits, however, after a time, induces so much capital to be vested in those establishments, that a reduction in profits naturally takes place; instead of contentment, dissatisfaction again begins to shew itself: they cry out that they want protection and encourage-

ment: they harass Congress with their importunate clamor: they must have still higher duties, or their establishments will fall to decay. Thus, they require restriction upon restriction, until they succeed in destroying all competition, by *prohibiting* the introduction of such foreign goods, as might interfere with goods of their own fabrication. This seems, to your memorialists, to be the course of things, and against the disastrous and ruinous result of such course, we trust that your body will save the nation.

Your memorialists have every reason to believe that, the proposed Tariff, if adopted, will operate oppressively on the agriculture, commerce, and navigation, of the country; that it will diminish the revenue, lead to direct taxes, and introduce a systematized plan of smuggling, the extent and effect of which cannot be foretold.

The oppressive character of this measure, will be attempted to be shewn by a few examples.

The first clause of the bill provides, that on all manufactures of wool, or of which wool shall be a component part, a duty of 30 per cent. *ad valorem*, shall be imposed, until the 30th June, 1825, and after that, a duty of  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. *ad val.* and it is provided, that these woollen goods, the original cost of which, at the place whence imported, with the addition of 10 per cent. shall be less than 80 cents per square yard, shall, with such addition, be deemed and taken to have cost 80 cents per square yard, and shall be charged with duty accordingly.

At the port of Richmond, for the year 1822, there were imported nearly 300 bales of a coarse woollen cloth, known by the name of napt cottons. This is an article peculiarly well adapted to the clothing of our laborers; and, although in the farming counties the existing high duties on coarse woollens have driven the farmers to the domestic manufacture of negro clothing, yet, in the tobacco-making districts, the purchase of napt cottons has yet been found more advantageous than family manufactures. Each of these bales of napt cottons contains twenty pieces, and each piece twenty yards, of the width of 27 inches. According to actual invoices, these bales, including packages at the place whence imported, cost, on an average, 26*l.* 9*s.* sterling each.

Thus 300 bales then cost - £ 7,935

Charges which are now subject to duty

10 per cent. - - 793 10

£ 8,728 10*s.* = \$38,793 33

The existing duty of 25 per centum *ad valorem*, gives to the Treasury - - - 9,698 33

Duty now proposed will be on 300 bales, each containing 400 running yards, or 300 square yards, is 90,000 square yards, which cost, with charges, about 32 cents per running yard, but are to be taken as having cost 80 cents per square yard, is - - - 72,000 00



A duty of 30 per cent gives to the Treasury	-	\$ 21,600 00
A duty of $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. after June, 1825,	-	24,000 00

So that, by the operation of the proposed tariff, the tobacco planters who trade with Richmond will be compelled to pay, upon this single article, in duties to the government, until the 30th June, 1825, the sum of \$11,901 67; and after that time, the enormous sum of 14,301 dollars 67 cents more than they now pay!!

According to the invoices before mentioned, the average price of the said article, with the charges, may be set down at 32 cents the running yard, at the place whence imported, and the duty thereon about eight cents. According to the proposed tariff of 30 per cent. the duty will be about 18 cents, and at  $33\frac{1}{3}$  will be about 20 cents the running yard, that is to say, instead of the present heavy duty of 25 per cent. ad valorem, the proposed bill will levy upon the consumer of this article about  $55\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. in one case, and 62 per cent. in the other, on the original cost of the article!! What is the effect? Add to these enormous duties the usual expenses of purchasing, shipping, insurance, freight, mercantile profit, &c. &c. and the article which now costs the consumer from 33 to 55 cents per running yard, will probably cost him from 50 to 75 cents. He cannot afford to pay it, he cannot purchase it from the merchant, and the latter will cease to import it.

It amounts, then, to a prohibition. The commercial capital heretofore employed in the procurement of that article, must be thrown out of that employment. The importing merchant loses his profit, the sailors their wages, the ship owner his freight, and the Government its revenue. But the tobacco planter must still procure his coarse woollens; and he has no other resort but to the northern manufacturer. The latter sells some substituted article, (most probably of inferior value) only a little lower than the increased price of the foreign article. The difference between the present price of the imported article, and the price which the northern manufacture will cost him, is an entire loss to the planter. Let us suppose that this difference is from 15 to 20 cents the running yard, (and it cannot possibly be less,) and the planter must pay this *tribute* annually to the northern capitalist, without any equivalent to himself, and with great loss to the Government. And here let us pause for a moment, and ask the representatives of the people, for what reason this tremendous exaction is required from the planter? It is declared that the great object is to foster and encourage *national* industry. What! is not the planter a part of the nation as well as the manufacturer? And if you plunder one part of the nation to enrich another, do you thereby encourage *national* industry? No! This is an egregious abuse of terms, by which we are to be gulled and cheated. Whatever may be the object, the effect of this measure will be to foster *local* industry, and to give enormous profits to *local* capital. It will impoverish the consumer, while it will enrich the manufacturer.

We do most seriously protest against this strong effort to compel

the southern planters to pay more than an Algerine tribute to the northern capitalists.

A review of many other parts, of the proposed tariff will display objections to it equally as forcible as those we have urged. Thus, it may be proved, that the proposed duty on *plains* will be an advance on the first cost of from 50 to 88 per cent. according to the original cost. On cotton goods, the minimum cost of which is fixed by the bill at 35 cents the square yard, the duty will be equally oppressive. Thus, on printed calicoes, which cost from  $4\frac{1}{2}$  to  $7\frac{1}{2}d.$  sterling, the duty will be from 40 to 64 per cent. on the first cost; on cotton shirtings, cost price from  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  to  $9d.$  sterling, it will be from 49 to 70 per cent.; on cotton brown Hollands, which cost  $4d.$  it will be 72 per cent.; on cambric muslins, which cost from  $4d.$  to  $12d.$  it will be from 50 to 95 per cent. and so on with many others.

Your memorialists will state one other example of the effect to be expected from excessive duties. It is proposed by the present scheme to lay a duty on wrought nails of five cents per pound. In 1817 the duty was three cents. At that duty there was imported into Richmond, and chiefly in American ships, 123,972 pounds, giving to the Treasury \$3,699 16 duty. The duty was afterwards raised to four cents, and the whole import of nails, during the year 1822, into the same port, as entered at the custom house, consisted of

3,635 pounds in American vessels,
56,960                      in foreign.

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60,595, which, at 4 cents, is \$2,423 80.

This statement shews that three cents produced more revenue, by 50 per cent. than four cents, and gave employment to our own ships. That the latter duty amounted to a prohibition, or nearly so, is evident, since the ships by which they were imported were chiefly chartered in Europe, to load in Virginia with tobacco and cotton, and the nails, serving as ballast, were conveyed free of freight. Although the present duty of 4 cents is so excessive, yet it is proposed by the bill to lay an additional duty of 25 per cent. What can be more obvious than this, that the point to be attained is a total and complete prohibition?

Your memorialists believe that the proposed bill, if it becomes a law, will produce the following effects:

1. That it will greatly increase the burthens of the farmer, the planter, and other consumers. It will compel them to pay dear for those articles of necessity and convenience for which they now pay comparatively less. They will probably cease to purchase the foreign articles, but the home manufacturer will take care that the domestic article, substituted in its place, shall only cost a little less than the foreign. And, as he will have a monopoly of the article, without any foreign competition, his own price will be fixed on it.

2. It will injure the commercial interest, because, unless the merchant can meet with ready sales, and make a reasonable profit on his sales, he must cease to import.

3. It will injure the navigation and tonnage of the country, for, as our imports decrease, so must our shipping, our seamen, and our foreign trade.

4. It will diminish the revenue from imposts, which has heretofore been considered as the most convenient, the least expensive, and the most productive way of raising revenue. If this effect necessarily results, the Government will be compelled to resort to direct taxation, and to excises, whose odious character is so well known as not to require any remarks.

5. It will inevitably produce smuggling, and all of its train of evils, and it is certainly true that there is no country in which this business can be carried on with greater facility than along our wide spread coast.

There is another effect which your memorialists seriously apprehend will take place, and which, though it may not immediately ensue, yet will be attended with more extensive injury than all of the others. Is there no danger, that the governments of Europe, seeing the restrictions which we impose on their productions, will, gradually, and as it suits their interests, retaliate our measures, and impose restrictions or prohibitions upon our raw materials? If tobacco is, indeed, so peculiarly adapted to our climate and our soil, that no other country can produce it so abundantly, and so cheap, can the same thing be said of cotton? We apprehend not. There are many sections of the globe, besides our southern and south western states, in which cotton can be raised to the greatest advantage, and which will come into competition with our great staple. Already it has been announced, that the importations from Brazil into the port of Liverpool, have increased to an alarming extent, notwithstanding the disturbed state of that country. We know that Great Britain is actively engaged in extending her commercial relations with all of South America, and, if she can find a ready vent for all of her cotton goods in that extensive region, is it not to be expected that she will hold forth every possible inducement to the cultivation of the raw material in that country? Will she not, as the supply increases, either impose heavy duties (now very light) on our cottons, or restrictions of some other description, that shall operate against us, while it favors the cottons of other countries? It has been asserted, that the cultivation of cotton has been commenced, with great success, on the fertile banks of the Nile. Egypt would be a most dangerous competitor, if she seriously turns her attention to this object.

If, then, there is danger that Europe can be supplied with this great staple, most abundantly, from other countries, is it not madness for our Congress to adopt a system of restriction on cotton goods, which will have the destructive and ruinous effect of inducing Europe to reject our supplies, and to get them elsewhere? Will Congress thus tamper with the very existence of our cotton growing states? Will they not pause before they resort to a rash experiment which may bring ruin on the south, and shake our confederation to the centre?

Perhaps it may be considered as intrusive in your memorialists to speak of these effects upon our cotton growing states, and that it should



be left to the wisdom and sagacity of those people to speak their own complaints to the Government. It is true, that in Virginia very little of that article is produced, when compared with that of our southern neighbors; and it is also true, that they are able to state their own grievances, and we have no doubt they will do so. But we will beg leave to say, that the commercial and agricultural interests of Virginia are most intimately connected with those of the southern and southwestern states. Whatever affects their prosperity, is most sensibly felt by us. Let them be brought to ruin, and our bankruptcy is not far distant.

What is the great and general beneficial effect which the manufacturer insists will be produced by these restrictive measures? It has been said, that the protection of our manufactures, by protective duties, will render us independent of foreign nations. In common with our fellow citizens throughout the United States, we cherish our political independence, and prize the right of self government, as the greatest and highest earthly boon, bestowed upon us by the bounty of Providence. But, an entire commercial independence we consider as neither practicable nor desirable. Is it not obvious, that the various soils and climates of the globe are adapted to the growth of various products, and that it is more beneficial for a country to exchange with others its various productions, than to attempt to raise all of them itself? For what purpose did the Great Author of nature provide the great highway of nations, but to enable men reciprocally to exchange their products, and to hold communion with each other with facility?

It is obvious to us, that the independence on foreign nations, of which the manufacturers speak so much, is a misnomer. When rightly understood, it means a *dependence* on themselves.

It has also been said, that the establishment of manufactures will open a more extensive home market for our breadstuffs and provisions. It may be true, that the withdrawing a number of laborers from agriculture, and placing them in manufactories, may diminish, to a limited extent, the productions of the farmer; and, though this may be beneficial to that class, in the immediate vicinity of such establishments, its benefits can never extend to remoter quarters; and in the consumption of the raw material, it cannot exceed one-tenth of the quantity grown. A market such as this, the agriculturists do not ask for, the planter rejects it, and neither are willing to accept it as a boon from the manufacturers, for the great sacrifice they are called on to make, and the burthens it is likely to produce hereafter; they have to pay a most exorbitant price for it, independent of the hazard of being forever excluded from much better and more extensive markets, which we now enjoy at much less expense.

Your memorialists cannot but regret, that, at this day, when the wisest statesmen in England, are regretting the pernicious effects of their prohibitory laws, and deploring the difficulties which exist against their removal, our politicians should anxiously wish to introduce that restrictive system into our code, the whole effects of which,

no man can foresee, and whose intricacy the greatest sagacity cannot unfold.

Your memorialists beg leave further to say, that the restrictions which have heretofore been imposed on the commerce of the country, have always been imposed for great national purposes. The embargo and non-intercourse laws, in all their various modifications, were intended to retaliate upon foreign nations their own injustice, or to defend us from their hostility. Their object was, to compel other countries to do us justice; but the present scheme has no such object. At a time of most profound peace, we are called upon to shackle our commerce, to divert our capital from agriculture and from commerce, for the purpose of increasing the profits of the manufacturing capitalist. A deadly blow is aimed at one part of the community, for the sole purpose of benefiting another part of the same community.

Your memorialists, therefore, most earnestly request, that your honorable body will, in your wisdom, think it proper to ward off this evil from us, by rejecting the bill, promptly and decisively.

ROBERT POLLARD, *Chairman.*

BERNARD PEYTON, *Secretary.*